

Podcast #3

Title: "Late Autumn Foraging"

(Upbeat music plays)

Narrator: I'm Kelly van Frankenhuyzen with the U.S Forest Service, Northern Research Station. Today, I will be talking to experts about fall foraging and harvesting food and resources from the forest.

Mary Rasmussen: My name is Mary Rasmussen and I'm a tribal liaison for the Forest Service working for the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forests in Wisconsin and the Ottawa National Forest in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. A lot of my work involves interaction with the Lake Superior Ojibwe tribe and so the National Forests in this area are very important resources to them, and they continue to gather wild plants here. One of the real important foraging resources to them is wild rice. Wild rice is an aquatic grass and many of our lakes in the National Forests contain dense populations of wild rice. So what we do as forest managers is make sure they have access through the National Forests to be able to get to these wild rice beds. I myself have harvested wild rice. It's a very rewarding experience. It's just a wonderful food, it's got a really nice nutty taste, it's nutritious and there is just a lot of satisfaction to be able to harvest your own wild rice.

Marla Emery: My name is Marla Emery and I'm a Research Geographer with the U.S Forest Service Northern Research Station. I'm located in Burlington, Vermont. My work focuses on the role of forests in providing food and sustaining cultures in environments that span human population densities from wildlands to inner cities.

Foraging is broadly defined as the practice of picking a plant or part of a plant, a mushroom, for the purposes of making use of it. Generally, most frequently as food, but also perhaps for health support, for beauty, and for utilitarian materials. So for example, if you've ever gone out hiking and seen a berry bush on the side of the trail and picked a handful of those berries and popped them in your mouth, you've been foraging.

We have every reason to think that foraging is as old as humanity itself. Human beings have been foraging for as long as there have been human beings. That means that a good many traditions and customs have built up around both the practices of foraging and the things that people gather when they are foraging. Those practices get passed on through the generations and have great importance.

Our research shows that at least in the Northeast, including the upper Midwest, there are two real peak times to forage. Those who are super foragers can forage 12 months out of the year, but there are particularly is an abundance of things to forage in the spring and in the fall. Right now we might be a little bit past the time, but there are really wonderful fall mushrooms, oyster mushrooms are one of those lovely fall mushrooms and there are several others. It's a great time for things like bittersweet and things that can go into arrangements, into holiday greens, and that sort of thing. A little earlier in the fall than we are at right now, there are a lot of fruits that aren't really ready to be eaten until they have had a hard frost on them or two, that sugars them up, in much the way that apples are sugared up by a hard frost. So wild grapes, you really don't want to eat the grapes until they have had a frost hit them because they are just too

astringent before a frost hits them, but a frost turns that around. Then there are things like plantain that are always out there, you can dig under the snow and find plantain or wintergreen.

Foraging is this wonderful lens, this wonderful pair of glasses that you can put on and learn to see the landscape around you in great detail through the course of a year from one little kind of land use to another. Learning to recognize, especially the weedy species, because nobody is worried about whether you're going to overharvest a weedy species, but learning around you these weedy species and how they change through the seasons, and how they change from one land use to another, provides a kind of really marvelous connection to nature and really deep satisfaction.

Narrator: For more information about foraging, visit Marla Emery's web page at www.nrs.fs.fed.us/people/memery

For more information about the US Forest Service Eastern Region visit www.fs.usda.gov/r9

For more information about the Forest Service Northern Research Station, visit www.nrs.fs.fed.us

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